



RDA in Italian: an Opportunity to Join the International Context

Mauro Guerrini

At the end of June 2015 the Italian translation of RDA, Resource Description and Access, was completed. RDA is the new standard for the description and discovery of resources designed for the digital age. As the heir to AACR2, RDA was created for a wide audience of users that includes libraries and bibliographic agencies worldwide. The JSC (Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA)¹ is the committee that oversees the development of this new standard. The JSC is comprised of members from Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and United States, with a representative from Germany (since 2011), and advised by a panel of European libraries and bibliographic agencies known as EURIG (European RDA Interest Group).² RDA is designed to have an international dimension based on IFLA's International Cataloguing Principles (ICP). There are numerous translations already published on the RDA Toolkit (French, German, Spanish) and those already completed and still ongoing (Chinese, Japanese, Finnish, Italian, etc.). It should not, however, be forgotten that, as happened with the MARC format, RDA is positioning itself as the de facto international standard for descriptive cataloging. This is a crucial point. Currently, if you want

¹ <http://www.rda-jsc.org/archivedsite/docs.html>.

² <http://www.slainte.org.uk/eurig>.



to have an international discussion around cataloging issues, it is essential to start with RDA.

The Italian translation of RDA is the result of work by a group of experts (appointed by decree of Rossana Rummo, the Director General for Library Heritage, Cultural Institutes and Copyright of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism – MiBACT), who belong to major public and private Italian universities, major Italian libraries and bibliographic agencies, and the Vatican Apostolic Library. The Italian translation is, therefore, an official translation for Italy and will be published by ICCU in the RDA Toolkit by the end of 2015.

The idea of the Italian translation comes from the desire to study the RDA standard in detail to better understand the underlying principles, the overall system, and the terminology, as well as to analyze the text and the many examples. This study lasted over two years, which allowed the examination of other available translations, the clarification of unclear statements, the communication to the JSC of some critical points, and the proposal of several improvements. Many suggestions came from Italian librarians, especially those who met during the several courses held in various parts of Italy on behalf of AIB, and from agencies that use RDA (e.g., Casalini Libri, from March 31, 2013) or will adopt RDA (e.g., URBE, Roman Union Ecclesiastical Libraries).

The completion of the translation marks a pivotal point for the future of RDA in Italy. It comes at a time when SBN, the most important project of library cooperation achieved in our country to date, needs renovation. SBN, in fact, started in the 1980's as an innovative project, thanks to the vision of Angela Vinay and Michel Boisset. Now is the time for SBN to be rejuvenated, to embrace today's international principles and standards, and to move towards technological innovation, such as linked open data.

It should be remembered that the RDA standard is flexible and equipped to include national options. There is, therefore, a way to insert local variations that are culturally and linguistically important to a community. Italy has a wonderful opportunity to share its excellent bibliographic traditions to help improve this international standard. This is in line both with Ranganathan's principle of local variation and with the new concept of universal bibliographic control. This new concept connects descriptions created internationally, while assuring the ability to express different points of view for local displays to meet local needs or to express shared perspectives. For example, the major libraries and national libraries in the United States, Canada, England, and Australia, as well as the libraries in German speaking countries have agreed to share their decisions for RDA options and implementation to follow essentially the same practices. At the same time, RDA does not require that descriptions be identical, if different agencies or different parties produce them with different points of view.

RDA undoubtedly opens a new horizon of cataloging (or metadating), and emphasizes the role of bibliographic agencies in the process of cooperation with all those who produce metadata.

MAURO GUERRINI, University of Florence.
mauro.guerrini@unifi.it.

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ABSTRACT: At the end of June 2015 the Italian translation of RDA, Resource Description and Access, was completed. This translation is the work of a group of experts, coming from the major public and private Italian universities, libraries and bibliographic agencies, and the Vatican Apostolic Library. Therefore, the Italian translation will be published by ICCU in the RDA Toolkit by the end of 2015 as the official RDA Italian version. The idea of translating RDA comes from the desire to study RDA in details, in order to understand better its underlying principles, the overall system, and the terminology, as well as to analyze the text and the various examples. The conclusion of the translation marks a pivotal point for the future of RDA in Italy. In fact, the time has come for SBN, the most important project of library cooperation achieved in our country to date, to be renovated, to embrace current International principles and standards such RDA, and to move towards technological innovation such as linked open data.

KEYWORDS: Cataloguing; FRBR; RDA; RDA Italian translation; SBN.

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